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ABSTRACT

This pilot study was conducted to evaluate the telephone reference service of a university library. Questions were called in by volunteers to several different divisions of the library to try to determine: (a) factual accuracy of responses, (b) level of interviewing by the staff person, and (c) attitude of the staff person. Results of the study are presented, in tables, by divisions which include the reference division, government documents division, newspaper division and the periodical division. General trends were evident however. Interviewing of the caller was not practiced where it might have helped the staff locate a correct answer. Also the source of an answer was seldom given to the user even though it was an academic setting where the user would probably find this information of value if not a necessity. Suggestions for further study are made and appendix material includes the original proposal, a record sheet, sample questions and an instruction sheet for volunteer callers. (Author/DH)

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EVALUATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LIBRARIES
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT
TELEPHONE INFORMATION SERVICE
PILOT STUDY

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Evaluation of the University of Minnesota Libraries Reference Department
Telephone Information Service--pilot study

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SUMMARY

This is a report of a pilot study conducted to evaluate the telephone information service of the University of Minnesota Libraries Reference Department. The study attempted to evaluate: a) factual accuracy of responses, b) level of interviewing by the staff person, and c) attitude of the staff person. (See appendix for proposal.)

The "users" in this study were asked to make calls to the various divisions of the department during normal working hours and to ask predetermined questions. Most of the calls were made between March 3 and 13, 1973; because of various scheduling problems with the users, a few calls were made at the beginning of spring quarter, March 28 to April 6. During or at the end of the interaction, the user was asked to complete a record sheet and evaluate the interchange. (See appendix for record sheet.) The questions used in this survey had been prepared prior to any calls, and the answers had been determined. (See appendix for sample questions and answers.) Answers were based on sources and holdings of the various divisions just prior to the asking of the first question. Despite extensive pre-testing of questions (some were asked of ten other libraries) and thorough searching of sources (some answers were checked in several sources because "facts" in major reference books varied), there was still some information given to users which had to be searched before the answer could be called right or wrong.

Questions for which the Reference Department staff person said they could not find an answer or gave a wrong fact or gave (out of date sources produced some wrong answers) were classified as incorrect. In addition, answers were not called correct if:

- a) the staff person did not offer to find an answer or refused to find an answer,
- b) the staff person referred the call to another division or library (since no questions were asked which could not be answered by the division called),
- c) in questions requiring interviewing, the staff person did not interview the user to find out what the real question was, and
- d) the staff person found a correct answer but gave the information incorrectly to the user (e.g., giving a dollar figure as a per cent).

General instructions to the callers included asking them not to disguise their voices or give any indication that their calls were anything other than legitimate requests for information. The most detailed instructions involved the rating of interviewing. Because of the importance of finding out what the user wants before providing him with information, the study tried to determine whether or not the reference department staff interviews its users. Three levels of interviewing were established and the users were given instructions on how to determine each level. (See appendix for instruction sheet.) The attempt to collect such data on interviewing is unique to this study.

Prior to the beginning of this study, each division submitted sample questions of the type they were willing to answer and were frequently asked to answer. These questions were not used for the study but they were followed closely as indicators of the type of service and number of functions the specific division could reasonably be expected to provide. In other words, no division was asked to

and divisions which it was not set up to perform and was not asked questions outside the subject area of its collection. In general, divisions which primarily answer holdings questions were called half as many times as those divisions which answered general questions (in their subject area.)

Attached to this summary is division by division report of this study. No total figures are given for the entire department because the divisions did not have comparable telephone information service policies. Some general trends can be mentioned. The lack of interviewing as a routine practice is evident. The reference desk and the government documents division performed the highest percentages of interviewing but gaps in the consistent use of this technique were noted nonetheless. The study uncovered an interesting problem with respect to interviewing and holdings questions; some holdings questions were answered in terms of current subscriptions rather than total holdings. This had not been the intent in framing the questions. Even holdings questions can result in communication failures when no attempt is made to interview.

This study revealed that the source of an answer is seldom given to the user when his question is answered. This is a procedure that might bear further consideration. Particularly in an academic library where the user has a better than average education, the source of an answer can be of value to a user. Perhaps it should be left to the judgment of the librarian in each case. The fact that many of these divisions receive holdings questions where the source is obvious may be a reason the source is not given.

Some comments were sometimes used to mention or elaborate on problems noticed by the users, in addition to noting good service. Some comments are included in the sections on specific divisions.

Some general problems include:

- a) unsolicited, evaluative remarks were made about the questions that were asked, e.g., "That's a good question!"
- b) unwarranted assumptions were made about the users, e.g., one user thought that he had been mistaken for another librarian in the University system.
- c) some staff people tried to give more information than was needed to answer the question.
- d) a few comments noted that the user had to "interview" the staff person (rephrasing and repeating as questions all information he was allowed to give) to find out whether he was getting an answer.

As this is a pilot study, it is believed that suggestions for further study are important. One recommendation would be that a neutral category be set up as a means of rating pleasantness. Some of the users in this study added this neutral category.

A second recommendation involves the use of the question on the record sheet, "were you asked to hold?" This was to mean that the person was put on hold prior to his asking the question. Responses indicate users were confused by this question and another question, "was the question answered while you waited?" Statistics on the "caller asked to hold question" are not included in this report. Being asked to hold prior to stating one's question may occur so rarely in the University library system that this is not a relevant distinction. If this is of importance, the instructions for the users should be made more clear in a future study.

An aspect of communication between user and librarian which this study did not emphasize is listening. The initial questions which the

Another recommendation for the study would be to have the statements of information needs made by the librarians would have to listen carefully to get all the significant elements of the request and to sort out the unnecessary information.

A fourth recommendation would be to try to correlate the scheduling of personnel--particularly librarians, non-professionals, and students--with the quality of the information service provided. Is there a difference in the service provided at times when a professional librarian is not available?

Initially, there was discussion of recording the telephone conversations, particularly of the reference division. Because of dividing the questions for each division among all the users (so that the voices of the callers would not be recognized), this would have meant access to recording equipment for all of the users. Since most of them did not have equipment of their own which they could use, recording of the calls was not done and, therefore, transcripts of the calls are not available. A fifth recommendation for a future study would be to obtain funding to provide for recording equipment. Also, if money were available to pay the users for their time, they might not find the idea of recording so inconvenient.

Funding would alleviate another problem connected with this study. The entire study--design, data collection, analysis, and preparation of the report--could be completed in about four weeks if it were not being done on a volunteer, spare-time basis. This pilot study could have been carried out for approximately \$750 to \$1000.

From the research point of view, this pilot study demonstrates

ample related data about the use of interviewing by the department can be collected.

The study posed several policy questions which the reference department might wish to consider, e.g., interviewing strategy, indication of source, general communications behavior on the telephone. Thus, the study has been a successful device for partially evaluating the reference department.

REFERENCE DIVISION

The Reference Division was asked twenty questions.

TABLE Ir

TIME	PER CENT OF CALLS
A.M.	35%
P.M. 12:00- 5:00	40%
P.M. 5:00- 10:00	25%

The users in this study were asked to distribute their calls throughout the working day. For the Reference Division, they made thirty-five per cent of their calls in the morning, forty per cent in the afternoon, and twenty-five per cent in the evening.

TABLE IIr

WAIT FOR ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	55%
NO	25%
NO ANSWER GIVEN	15%
NOT RECORDED	5%

This table shows that fifty-five percent of the questions asked during this study could be answered within a few minutes which would justify the user waiting for an answer. Twenty-five per cent of the questions required more time (or staff had more calls at that time) and the user was asked to call back later to obtain the answer to his question. (Users were instructed not to leave their names and telephone numbers.) Fifteen per cent of the questions were never answered. In these cases, it seems additional interviewing might have been helpful. The additional information might have helped the library staff person to interpret the question more correctly.

TABLE IIIr

ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
CORRECT	60%
INCORRECT	25%
NO ANSWER GIVEN	15%

This table indicates the number of correct or incorrect answers given by the Reference Division. It is interesting to note that one of the incorrect answers was in part, if not totally, the result of inadequate interviewing. It is also interesting to note that one question was not answered at all although considerable searching was done. This reflects the fact that events that occur near the date of publication of a reference source may not be included in it. The usual sources were checked but did not have the correct answer.

... was just correct because it included correct information but the semantics of the user and the librarian were never negotiated properly and the answer given was not the answer sought. In this study, the Reference Division was successful in meeting the information needs of the users a majority of the time.

TABLE IVr

SOURCE	PER CENT OF CALLS
GIVEN	30%
NOT GIVEN	60%
PARTIALLY GIVEN	5%
SOURCES CHECKED	5%

The number of times the source is given versus the times it is not given is very interesting. In an academic setting, it would seem that the source of information could be of importance to the user. The sixty per cent not given figure reflects that the source of an answer is not usually given. The staff might be encouraged to ask the user if he would like the source of the information. It should be noted that although a staff person was unable to answer the question for a user, he told all the sources checked in trying to find the answer.

TABLE Vr

QUESTIONS	PER CENT OF CALLS
REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	55%
DO NOT REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	45%

This table indicates the number of questions that should need interviewing in order to find the best answer and the questions that could be answered without knowing any additional information. This, of course, assumes that the question was properly understood when it was first given.

Despite the fact that a correct answer could be given based on the original question, interviewing to clarify the question is still a useful practice. As this table indicates, the study attempted to have a reasonable division between interviewing and non-interviewing questions. The table below will explain the level of interviewing done by this division.

TABLE VIr

INTERVIEWING	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	50%
NO	20%
SOMWHAT	30%

Interviewing in this study was generally defined as an attempt by the library staff person to arrive at the real information need of the user. The "yes" category means that the staff member asked questions or rephrased the question to make sure he understood exactly what the user wanted. "No" means the staff person made no attempt to do anything but answer the question as it was first stated. "Somewhat" was used to categorize anything inbetween, i.e., any attempt at all to clarify the question, up to, but not including, obtaining the actual question. The above figure of eighty per cent reveals that most of the time some degree of interviewing is done. This is most important in information requests which come over the phone. A staff member has no visual cues to aid him in understanding the information need of the user. Many times a preliminary question by a user is not his final information request. It appears that the Reference Division is doing some interviewing the majority of the time. This figure is considerably higher than for the other divisions in this study. This may reflect the type of question asked this division. The importance of interviewing is reflected in the fact that an incorrect answer and two unanswered questions might have been handled correctly if more extensive interviewing had taken place. Our users knew more about their information need than the staff member extracted from them.

TABLE VIIr

PLEASANT	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	95%
NO	0%
QUALIFIED YES	5%

These figures show that the users in this study found the staff members to be pleasant when answering the telephone ninety-five per cent of the time. This is very useful to the staff as it was found at times during this study that the attitude of the staff member was as important as the correct answer in determining the overall rating which the user gave and whether he would call the source again.

TABLE VIIIr

CALL AGAIN	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	90%
NO	5%
NOT RECORDED	5%

It appears from these figures that pleasantness of the staff and calling again are somewhat related. Fifteen percent of the questions were not answered and twenty-five per cent were answered incorrectly and yet ninety per cent of the users responded that they would call this information source again. This reinforces the assumption that a pleasant staff is a must in having a well-used reference service.

The overall rating of the Reference Division was 3.4. This figure is an average of the individual ratings given by the users in this study. The continuum established for this study was very satisfactory (5) to very unsatisfactory (1). Three on the continuum equalled acceptable. The range of responses for the services of the Reference Division was from five to one. The interaction that was deemed very unsatisfactory was one in which no answer was given and for which no attempt was made to search out the answer.

The Business Reference Division was asked twenty questions.

TABLE Ib

TIME	PER CENT OF CALLS
A.M.	30%
P.M. 12:00-5:00	60%
P.M. 5:00-8:00	10%

The users in this study were asked to distribute their calls throughout the working day. For this division, they made thirty per cent of their calls in the morning, sixty per cent in the afternoon, and ten per cent in the evening.

TABLE IIb

WAIT FOR ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	70%
NO	25%
NOT RECORDED	5%

This table indicates that business reference is able to answer the

... questions posed of it in a short time so that the user
 could get an answer. It should be noted that several questions were
 not answered but they are included in the category yes in this table.
 The reason for this is that the librarian made a disposition of the
 question by offering no further assistance.

TABLE IIIB

ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
CORRECT	40%
INCORRECT	25%
NO ANSWER GIVEN	15%
REFERRED	10%
DID NOT GET TO REAL QUESTION	10%

This division was not altogether successful in its handling of the questions posed by this study. Only forty per cent of all the questions were answered correctly; twenty-five per cent were incorrect; fifteen per cent of the questions were not answered at all; and twenty per cent more were not handled appropriately. Several of the questions answered incorrectly could have been correctly answered using major business reference sources. It appears that there may be a lack of knowledge about information contained in some of these sources. A great reliance is placed on business dictionaries rather than more current or detailed sources. One question about a local company was answered incorrectly because the source used was out of date.

of interviewing was noticed and this will be discussed in the following table. In one instance, the staff person said he didn't know the answer and could not find a definition. He then paused and said nothing more. An offer of further checking could have been made.

TABLE IVb

SOURCE	PER CENT OF CALLS
GIVEN	35%
NOT GIVEN	65%
USER ASKED FOR SOURCE	5%

The source of an answer was given to thirty-five per cent of the questions asked of the Business Reference Service in this study. This figure is a little misleading as a referral to a "business dictionary" was considered being given a source. This inclusion is debatable as a source should probably be a specific reference where the answer was found. In one case where the user asked for the source, the reply was "a reprint." The journal title and year were given but no further citation was included.

TABLE Vb

QUESTIONS	PER CENT OF CALLS
REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	60%
DO NOT REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	40%

This table indicates the number of questions that should need interviewing in order to find the best answer and the questions that could be answered without knowing additional information. This, of course, assumes that the question was properly understood in the first place.

Despite the fact that a correct answer could be given based on the original question, interviewing to clarify the question is still a useful practice. As this table indicates, the study attempted to have a reasonable division between interviewing and non-interviewing questions. The table below will explain the level of interviewing done by the Business Reference Service.

TABLE VIIb

INTERVIEWING	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	25%
NO	65%
SOMEWHAT	10%

Interviewing in this study was generally defined as an attempt by the library staff person to arrive at the real information need of the user. The "yes" category means that the staff member asked questions or rephrased the question to make sure he understood exactly what the user wanted. "No" means that the staff person made no attempt to do anything but answer the question as it was first stated. "Somewhat" was used to categorize anything inbetween--i.e., any attempt at all to

clarify the question, up to, but not including, obtaining the actual question.

This table reflects the fact that interviewing the user is not a general practice of the Business Reference Division. This is unfortunate as this lack of interviewing cause several of the questions posed in this study to be answered incorrectly. Much reliance is made on superficial answers; few in-depth answers are given. Further interviewing should bring out the fact that more detailed information is really needed by the user. It would be expected that interviewing might be quite necessary for this library as they receive calls from individuals and businesses with varied backgrounds and levels of expertise. More extensive interviewing on the part of the library staff would also enable the user to make fuller use of the library's resources.

TABLE VIItb

PLEASANT	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	85%
NO	10%
NEUTRAL	5%

This table indicates that eighty-five percent of the calls in this study were judged to be answered in a pleasant manner. The ten per cent of the interactions that were found to be unpleasant involved lack of interest on the part of the staff, inability to answer the question, and

... of unwillingness to search further for an answer or a different answer on the part of the staff person.

TABLE VIIIb

CALL AGAIN	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	50%
NO	40%
QUESTIONABLE	5%
NOT RECORDED	5%

This table reflects that fifty per cent of the calls made to this library were handled in such a manner that the user would call again for information. It should be noted that, in this instance, pleasantness is not equal to the per cent of times calling again is marked. This figure instead seems to reflect on the lack of satisfactory negotiation and answering of the questions posed in this study. It may also show that this library is not the only source of information in this area. It seems as if the reference desk has a great deal of business information and this second source might make it less necessary to use this source if the user felt his question had been dealt with unsuccessfully.

The overall rating of this division was 2.5 on a continuum of five equals very satisfactory and one equals very unsatisfactory. The middle of this continuum was marker three equals acceptable. The range of individual ratings for each question posed was one to four; some questions were obviously dealt with very well. A general comment would be that this service should be able to handle many of the questions posed by this

and were not intended to be essentially different from the ones obtained in everyday contact with users.

The Government Documents Division was asked ten questions.

TABLE Ig

TIME	PER CENT OF CALLS
A.M.	40%
P.M. 12:00- 5:00	40%
P.M. 5:00- 10:00	10%
NOT RECORDED	10%

The users in this study were asked to distribute their calls throughout the working day. For this division, they made forty per cent of their calls in the morning, forty per cent in the afternoon, and ten per cent in the evening.

TABLE IIg

WAIT FOR ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	70%
NO	10%
NOT RECORDED	20%

One of the questions asked the users in this study was: "Did your question answered while you waited?" It appears that the government documents staff is able to answer many questions within a short time span so that the user can reasonably wait for an answer rather than calling back. The wait for an answer must have been brief as no comments were made regarding unusual delay in receiving an answer.

TABLE IIIg

ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
CORRECT	60%
INCORRECT	20%
QUESTIONABLE	10%
NO ANSWER GIVEN	10%

This table of correct versus incorrect answers includes two questions that need to be reviewed. An answer that was deemed questionable involved the fact that the staff person immediately referred the user to a specialized library. This is correct to do in some cases but in this instance the referral was made too quickly. A check of the documents collection should have been made before the question was referred as a document was available that could have fit the need. A second answer was incorrect because the source used for the answer was so old that it did not reflect many current changes.

TABLE VI

SOURCE GIVEN	PER CENT OF CALLS
GIVEN	10%
NOT GIVEN	50%
NOT APPLICABLE	10%
PARTIAL SOURCE	10%
NOT RECORDED	10%

The source of an answer can be an important part of a correct answer. It appears from this study that the source of information is not often given by the government documents staff.

TABLE Vg

QUESTIONS	PER CENT OF CALLS
REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	50%
DO NOT REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	50%

This table indicates the number of questions that should need interviewing in order to find the best answer and the questions that could be answered without knowing any additional information. This, of course, assumes that the question was properly understood when it was first given.

...the fact that a correct answer could be given to the question, interviewing to clarify the question is a useful practice. As this table indicates, the study attempted to have a reasonable division between interviewing and non-interviewing questions. The table below will explain the level of interviewing done by this library.

TABLE VI

INTERVIEWING	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	50%
NO	30%
SOMEWHAT	20%

Interviewing in this study was generally defined as an attempt by the library staff person to arrive at the real information need of the user. The "yes" category means that the staff member asked questions or rephrased the question to make sure he understood exactly what the user wanted. "No" means the staff person made no attempt to do anything but answer the question as it was first stated. "Somewhat" was used to categorize anything in between, i.e., any attempt at all to clarify the question, up to, but not including, obtaining the actual question. The staff of the government documents division is quite consistent in their attempts at interviewing. This technique is very valuable as many users are unsure of how to ask for the information they really need.

TABLE VIIg

WAS PLEASANT	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	90%
NO	0%
NEUTRAL	10%

This table shows that the users in this study regarded ninety per cent of their initial interactions with the government documents staff as pleasant.

TABLE VIIIg

CALL AGAIN	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	90%
NO	0%
NEUTRAL	10%

This table reflects the fact that most of the users in this study would call this source again for information. Pleasantness of the staff appears to be related to the number of users that would call again.

The users' average overall rating of their interactions with this division is 3.8. This is on a continuum from five equals very satisfactory to one equals very unsatisfactory. It appears that the users

to this study believe the government documents division service to be better than three which equals acceptable.

An overall comment on this division was that the staff was helpful.

NEWSPAPER DIVISION

The Newspaper Division was asked ten questions.

TABLE In

TIME	PER CENT OF CALLS
A.M.	50%
P.M. 12:00- 5:00	50%
P.M. 5:00- 10:00	0%

The users in this study were asked to distribute their calls throughout the working day. For the Newspaper Division, they made fifty per cent of their calls in the morning and fifty per cent of their calls in the afternoon. Unfortunately, no calls were made in the evening.

TABLE IIn

WAIT FOR ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	80%
NO	10%
NOT RECORDED	10%

This table shows that the Newspaper Division is able to answer most of its questions rapidly enough so that the user can wait on the phone for an answer. This is a commendable practice only if the answers are valid. It appears that at least a few times top-of-the-head answers are given. While this practice may be justifiable for staff members of long standing, it can not be a good general policy. Answering a question immediately usually means that little or no interviewing takes place. Table VIⁿ supports this conclusion. It should be noted that two questions that were not answered are included in the "yes" category in this table because disposition of the question had taken place. The staff member offered no further assistance.

TABLE IIIⁿ

ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
CORRECT	70%
INCORRECT	10%
DID NOT ANSWER	20%

Seventy per cent of the questions asked of the Newspaper Division in this study were answered correctly; ten per cent were answered incorrectly; twenty per cent were not answered. One of the questions answered incorrectly was a top-of-the-head response that was not correct; the library staff person assumed that the caller was asking about current subscriptions rather than complete holdings when the question had in no way implied that.

TABLE IVn

SOURCE	PER CENT OF CALLS
GIVEN	0%
NOT GIVEN	80%
NOT APPLICABLE	10%
NOT RECORDED	10%

This table indicates that the Newspaper Division seldom gives the source of its information. This may reflect the fact that their questions are often about their holdings.

TABLE Vn

QUESTIONS	PER CENT OF CALLS
REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	40%
DO NOT REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	60%

This table indicates the number of questions that should require interviewing in order to find the best answer and the questions that could be answered without knowing any additional information. This, of course, assumes that the question was properly understood when it was first given.

Since all questions asked of the Newspaper Division were essentially holdings questions, they could usually be answered without additional

information. However, they could also be answered incorrectly because of unwarranted assumptions by the staff person which could have been clarified through interviewing. As this table indicates, this study attempted to have a reasonable division between interviewing and non-interviewing questions. The table below will explain the level of interviewing done by this library.

TABLE VI

INTERVIEWING	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	10%
NO	70%
SOMEWHAT	20%

Interviewing in this study was generally defined as an attempt by the library staff person to arrive at the real information need of the user. The "yes" category means that the staff person asked questions or rephrased the question to make sure he understood exactly what the user wanted. "No" means the staff member made no attempt to do anything but answer the question as it was first stated. "Somewhat" was used to categorize anything inbetween, i.e., any attempt at all to clarify the question, up to, but not including, obtaining the actual question. The newspaper library staff did little interviewing of its users during this study. Seventy per cent of the time no attempt was made to further clarify the information need of the user. This practice does not give the user the best information the library could

supply. Many users do not formulate their questions to best fit the specific library they are calling. This is where interviewing is very important.

TABLE VIIIn

PLEASANT	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	90%
NO	0%
NEUTRAL	10%

This table reflects the fact that the users in this study regarded the library staff person to be pleasant in answering ninety per cent of the calls. A neutral response was given when a library staff person dealt with a question in a brisk, uninterested manner.

TABLE VIIIIn

CALL AGAIN	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	70%
NO	10%
NEUTRAL	10%
NOT RECORDED	10%

Seventy per cent of the telephone calls were satisfactory enough for the users in this study to determine that they would use this source again. A user that would not use this source again believed the staff member to be rushed, uninterested, and unwilling to pursue the question and gave no answer. The staff person did not even suggest an additional source to check for this information.

The overall rating of this library was 3.1 on a continuum of five equals very satisfactory to one equals very unsatisfactory. This 3.1 figure indicates that the users' overall feeling was that the service of the Newspaper Division was acceptable. A general comment was that additional checking could have been very beneficial toward the answering of some of the questions. The comment was also made that the library staff seemed interested in helping the user.

PERIODICAL DIVISION

The Periodical Division was asked ten questions.

TABLE Ip

TIME	PER CENT OF CALLS
A.M.	30%
P.M. 12:00- 5:00	40%
P.M. 5:00- 10:00	30%

The users in this study were asked to distribute their calls throughout the working day. For the Periodicals Division, they made thirty per cent of their calls in the morning, forty per cent in the afternoon, and thirty per cent in the evening.

TABLE IIp

WAIT FOR ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	100%
NO	0%

The table above reflects a unique situation for this study. The Periodical Division was able to answer all information requests presented to it in this study while the user waited. These answers must have also

been forthcoming quite rapidly as no one indicated an unusual wait. A reason for this might be that many questions posed to this division are holdings questions which can be answered quickly by checking the Kardex. Whatever the reason, the speed of response is commendable.

TABLE IIIp

ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
CORRECT	70%
INCORRECT	30%

This table indicates that the Periodical Division answered correctly seventy per cent of the questions posed to them in this study. This is obviously an acceptable percentage but a comment must be made. The thirty per cent incorrect answers were all given to questions which did not refer to obviously holdings-type information. A simple check of the Kardex would not suffice. This finding may reflect the training of the students who work at this desk a great deal of the time. It should also be noted that publication name changes and publishers addresses seem to cause this division some difficulty.

TABLE IVp

SOURCE	PER CENT OF CALLS
GIVEN	10%
NOT GIVEN	90%

This table reflects the fact that the Periodical Division seldom gives the source of its information. This may in part be caused by the type of question it most often receives. An answer to a holdings question would seem to have an obvious source. However, several of the questions in this study were answered by a staff person without checking any source. While this practice may be justifiable for staff members of long tenure, it can not be a good general policy. A collection of this size is much too active to make top-of-the-head responses a routine practice. As indicated in the discussion under table VIp, this practice can lead to a too rapid disposition of the question.

TABLE Vp

QUESTIONS	PER CENT OF CALLS
REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	50%
DO NOT REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	50%

This table indicates the number of questions that should need interviewing in order to find the best answer and the questions that could be answered without knowing any additional information. This, of course, assumes that the question was properly understood when it was first given.

Since all questions asked of the Periodical Division were essentially holdings questions, they could usually be answered without further information. However, they could also be answered incorrectly because of unwarranted assumptions by the staff person which could

have been clarified through interviewing. As this table indicates, the study attempted to have a reasonable division between interviewing and non-interviewing questions. The table below will explain the level of interviewing done by this division.

TABLE VI_p

INTERVIEWING	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	30%
NO	65%
SOMEWHAT	5%

Interviewing in this study was generally defined to mean an attempt by the library staff person to arrive at the real information need of the user. The "yes" category means that the staff member asked questions or rephrased the question to make sure he understood exactly what the user wanted. "No" means the staff person made no attempt to do anything but answer the question as it was first stated. "Somewhat" was used to categorize anything inbetween, i.e., any attempt at all to clarify the question, up to, but not including, obtaining the actual question. This table shows that interviewing was not done in all instances where it would have been helpful. This again may reflect the type of calls most often received by this division, but taking a question at first hearing is often unwise. It is possible that some of the thirty per cent incorrect answers could have been dealt with more satisfactorily had the staff person made a greater attempt at finding out the real information need of the user. A couple of users in this study commented

that the question was answered and the phone hung up before they were able to reply in any way. In one instance the user had to interview the staff person to get his question answered.

TABLE VIIp

PLEASANT	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	90%
NO	0%
NEUTRAL	10%

This table reflects the fact that the users in this study found the staff of the Periodical Division to be pleasant when answering the telephone ninety per cent of the time.

TABLE VIIIp

CALL AGAIN	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	100%
NO	0%

This table explains that one hundred per cent of the users in this study would call the Periodical Division again for information. This is a very good recommendation for this library's service. However, it must also be noted that with the possible exception of the catalog information desk, this is the only source for some holdings information.

Care must be taken to assume that some users may be pragmatic as well as pleased with the service.

The overall rating of this division is 3.2 on a continuum from five equals very satisfactory to one equals very unsatisfactory. This 3.2 figure was obtained by finding the average of the individual ratings of this division's interactions with users. On this continuum three equaled acceptable.

The Listening Room was asked ten questions.

TABLE II

TIME	PER CENT OF CALLS
A.M.	30%
P.M. 12:00- 4:30	60%
P.M. 6:00- 9:00	10%

The users were asked to distribute their calls throughout the working day. For this division, the users made thirty per cent of their calls in the morning, sixty per cent in the afternoon, and ten per cent in the evening.

TABLE III

WAIT FOR ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	100%
NO	0%

This table indicates that the Listening Room is able to answer all

on a who-you-wait basis. A contributing factor to this is the fact that most calls are requests for holdings information. As the collection is quite small, a check for holdings could be done quite quickly.

TABLE III

ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
CORRECT	90%
INCORRECT	0%
QUESTIONABLE	10%

This table shows that the Listening Room was very successful in dealing with the questions posed during this study. Ten per cent of the questions were answered with questionably correct answers. One answer was very flip; it was, however, essentially correct information although very incomplete. Detailed answers were almost non-existent; brief yes or no responses were common. It must be emphasized that all the questions posed in this study to this division involved some degree of need for holdings information.

TABLE IV

SOURCE	PER CENT OF CALLS
GIVEN	0%
NOT GIVEN	100%

These findings are very simple to interpret; the listening room staff gave the source of their answers. The reason for this lack of checking of sources is probably the type of questions received by this library. It was noticed that many questions were answered on the spot without a check of the holdings catalog. Even though the collection is small, memory is fallible, and should not always be relied on for answers to holdings questions.

TABLE VI

QUESTIONS	PER CENT OF CALLS
REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	40%
DO NOT REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	60%

This table indicates the number of questions that should require interviewing in order to find the best answer and the questions that could be answered without knowing any additional information. This, of course, assumes that the question was properly understood when it was first stated.

Since all questions asked of the Listening Room were essentially holdings questions, they could usually be answered without additional information. However, they could also be answered incorrectly because of unwarranted assumptions by the staff person which could have been clarified through interviewing. As this table indicates, the study attempted to have a reasonable division between interviewing and non-

The table below will explain the level of interviewing done by the library.

TABLE VII

INTERVIEWING	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	20%
NO	70%
SOMWHAT	10%

Interviewing in this study was generally defined as an attempt by the library staff person to arrive at the real information need of the user. The "yes" category means that the staff member asked questions or rephrased the question to make sure that he understood exactly what the user wanted. "No" means that the staff person made no attempt to do anything other than answer the question as it was first given. "Somewhat" was used to categorize anything inbetween, i.e., any attempt at all to clarify the question, up to, but not including, obtaining the actual question. This table reflects the fact that interviewing is not done routinely by the Listening Room. There was one instance during this study that the user had to request the information in a couple of different ways in order to elicit an answer. Several other times during this study additional interviewing would have given the user even more service although the yes or no response had to be judged correct. Some of the answers were very brief and no attempt was made to give additional information support.

TABLE VII

REPLY	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	50%
NO	20%
NEUTRAL	30%

This table indicates that fifty per cent of the calls were answered in a pleasant manner; thirty per cent of the questions were dealt with in a neutral manner. Unfortunately, twenty per cent of the questions were handled in an unpleasant way; the replies were curt and at times almost rude.

TABLE VIII

CALL AGAIN	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	80%
NO	10%
NOT RECORDED	10%

Eighty per cent of the questions were dealt with in such a manner that the users decided they would call this source again. However, as with other unique collections, this is the only source for many materials so a call again response may be a practical decision.

... of the individual ratings for each ...
... This is based on a continuum from five equals very satis-
factory to one equals very unsatisfactory; three equals acceptable.

The Map Division was asked ten questions.

TABLE Im

TIME	PER CENT OF CALLS
A.M.	10%
P.M. 12:00- 5:00	70%
P.M. 5:00- 8:00	10%
PHONE NOT ANSWERED	10%

This table reflects that users made too few calls during the morning. One call recorded under "P.M." was attempted in the morning, but the user was told no one was working in the library at that exact time. The person who answered the phone said he was there only to answer the phone while the staff person was away from his desk. For the ten per cent categorized as "phone not answered" a call was attempted four times, on three different days, but the telephone was never answered. These various attempts were made during scheduled working hours.

TABLE II

WAIT FOR ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	80%
NO	10%
PHONE NOT ANSWERED	10%

The eighty per cent of calls answered while the user waited includes not very satisfactory responses. It was noted that several questions were answered with a yes or no on the spot with no check of the collection. While this practice may be justifiable for staff members of long tenure, it can not be a good general policy. And, in fact, as pointed out below, may relate to a tendency to try to deal with questions too rapidly. The second unsatisfactory point is that more than once the staff person made little attempt to specifically answer questions. Instead the user would be encouraged to come into the library and check for himself. It is understood that with a small staff and a large collection it is impossible to expect the staff to check maps for lengthy searches. But answers should at least be attempted before the search is judged too lengthy for the staff to perform.

TABLE III

ANSWER	PER CENT OF CALLS
CORRECT	50%
INCORRECT	40%
PHONE NOT ANSWERED	10%

This table reflects a weakness in validity of some answers given. In an effort to present an incorrect picture of map division service, it must be stated that two calls included in the forty per cent incorrect were not incorrect in the sense that the information given was false but were judged incorrect because the answer given was incorrect for the question asked. If this table is representative of the service offered by the map division, a recommendation would be that the question asked be listened to more closely and more detail be given in the answer.

TABLE IVm

SOURCE	PER CENT OF CALLS
GIVEN	10%
NOT GIVEN	70%
NOT APPLICABLE	10%
PHONE NOT ANSWERED	10%

This table shows that the source of an answer was given only ten per cent of the time. The source of information could be useful to many users. Many users of maps are unfamiliar with them and a source would give them a better understanding of how the answer they receive should be used. One reason why the source is not given may be that many of the questions this division receives are holdings questions.

TABLE Vm

QUESTION	PER CENT OF CALLS
REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	50%
DO NOT REQUIRE INTERVIEWING	50%

This table indicates the number of questions that could have been answered better via interviewing and the questions that could be answered without knowing any additional information. This, of course, assumes that the question was properly understood when it was first stated.

Since all questions asked of the map division were essentially holdings questions, they could usually be answered without additional information. However, they could also be answered incorrectly because of unwarranted assumptions by the staff person which could have been clarified through interviewing. As this table indicates, the study attempted to have a reasonable division between interviewing and non-interviewing questions. The table below will explain the level of interviewing done by this division.

TABLE VIm

INTERVIEW	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	0%
NO	90%
SOMEWHAT	0%
PHONE NOT ANSWERED	10%

This table is to reflect the fact that interviews were not held with the staff of the map division. It was not that no one at the time for any of the questions asked during this survey. As is mentioned above, some questions used in this study were answered incorrectly because the real need was not arrived at. In fact, one question considered answered correctly actually had a second part which was never even arrived at because of the rapid top-of-the-head answer given to the first part. A comment made by one user was "I had to do the interviewing."

TABLE VIIm

PLEASANT	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	80%
NO	0%
NEUTRAL	10%
DOES NOT ANSWERED	10%

Eighty per cent of the time, users found the staff of the map division to be pleasant. One user rated the staff neutral.

TABLE VIII

CALL AGAIN	PER CENT OF CALLS
YES	70%
NO	10%
QUESTIONABLE	10%
PHONE NOT ANSWERED	10%

This table indicates that twenty per cent of the questions asked were handled in such a manner that the user would be hesitant to use this source of information again. As this is such a specialized collection its users would be quite inconvenienced if they had to go elsewhere.

The users' overall rating of their interactions with this division is 3.0 on a continuum of five equals very satisfactory to one equals very unsatisfactory. Three equals acceptable. It should be noted that this rating does not include the unanswered phone.

G. K. R.
Dec. 12, 1972

Pilot Study: Evaluation of University of Minnesota Reference Department

1. All divisions of the University Reference Department will be included in the study. However, each division will be studied separately because of differing kinds of information and service policies.
2. The study will be limited to telephone information requests.
3. The study will attempt to evaluate:
 - a. factual accuracy of responses
responses may be categorized as correct, incorrect, no answer
 - b. interviewing by subject
interviewing may be categorized as none, minimal, adequate
 - c. attitude of subject
attitude may be categorized on a five-point scale and by a yes-no response to whether the caller would call that information source again
4. The study will not evaluate:
 - a. service by type of user
 - b. service by subject area of question
except in so far as certain subjects or types of questions are characteristic of specific divisions of the reference department
for the reference division itself, a broad range of areas will be covered
5. It is hoped that the study will be completed during the winter quarter of 1973.
6. It is hoped that a report of the study will be submitted to the reference department near the end of winter quarter or the beginning of spring quarter 1973, including a record of each call as well as a descriptive statistical summary for each division.

PLEASE FILL THIS OUT EITHER DURING THE CALL OR IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD

NAME _____

TIME CALL WAS PLACED _____ DATE CALL WAS PLACED _____

LIBRARY THAT WAS CALLED _____ PHONE NUMBER _____

QUESTION ASKED _____

WERE YOU ASKED TO HOLD? _____

HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU CALL BACK? _____

WAS THE QUESTION ANSWERED WHILE YOU WAITED? YES _____ NO _____

WHAT WAS THE ANSWER YOU WERE GIVEN? (Please record as accurately as possible)

WAS THE SOURCE OF THE INFORMATION GIVEN? YES _____ NO _____
IF YES, WHAT SOURCE WAS USED? _____

DID THE PERSON ANSWERING TRY TO INTERVIEW YOU? (Read general instructions before answering this question)

YES _____ NO _____ SOMEWHAT _____

WAS THE PERSON PLEASANT WHEN HE/SHE ANSWERED THE PHONE YES _____ NO _____

RATE YOUR OVERALL FEELING ABOUT THIS INTERACTION (Put a check mark on the scale in the place that is most appropriate to the way you feel).

5 4 3 2 1
Very Satisfactory Acceptable Very Unsatisfactory

WOULD YOU CALL THIS INFORMATION SOURCE FOR OTHER QUESTIONS? YES _____ NO _____

If you have any additional comments, please add them below.

APPENDIX

Part 3: Sample questions and answers

All questions were typed on a standard question sheet with three parts:

QUESTION SHEET

THE QUESTION YOU ARE TO ASK IS _____

THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU MAY GIVE IS _____

THE REASON FOR CALLING, IF YOU SHOULD BE ASKED, IS _____

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

REFERENCE DIVISION

1. Question: What country produced the most coke in 1965? How much?

Additional

Information: I mean coke as the type of coal.

Reason: I read the U.S. wasn't first that year.

Answer: U.S.S.R.; 74.4 million short tons

Source: 1972 Commodity Yearbook

2. Question: What does chrematophobia mean? My doctor told me I had it. Can you please get me the answer?

Additional

Information: None

Reason: I really want to know.

Answer: fear of money

Source: Hinsie: Psychiatry dictionary, 4th ed., p. 126.

BUSINESS REFERENCE SERVICE

1. Question: Do you have any information on airlines?

Additional

Information: I want to know how many passengers Braniff flew in 1970.

Reason: I want to see if they are growing as a company.

Answer: 6,247,000 passengers enplaned

Source: Air Transport Assn. of America: Air Transport, 1971, p. 24, or CAB Air Carrier Statistics

2. Question: What is the DUNS number for Thomasville Furniture Co.?

Additional

Information: None

Reason: I want to write to Duns for information on this company.

Answer: D-U-N-S-00-321-9615

Source: Dun and Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory, 1973, p. 1962

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS DIVISION

1. Question: Do you have the Supreme Court decision on abortion?

Additional
Information: None

Reason: I want to read it.

Answer: Roe v. Wade, Jan. 22, 1973; the report was received by the documents division on Feb. 6, 1973.

Source: Holdings

2. Question: How many member nations are there in the United Nations?

Additional
Information: None

Reason: I must wondered.

Answer: As of Sept. 19, 1972, there were 132 members

Source: 1973 World Almanac

NEWSPAPER DIVISION

1. Question: Can you tell me when the St. Paul News Digest stopped publication?

Additional
Information: I think it was published during the war.

Reason: I have a clipping from one copy and want to look it up.

Answer: ceased publication in Jan. 1946

Source: Holdings

PERIODICAL DIVISION

1. Question: I can't find Duns Review and Modern Industry for 1972. Did you stop taking it?

Additional
Information: None

Reason: I need an article from it on managers

Answer: title changed to Duns

Source: Holdings

LISTENING ROOM

1. Question: Do you have anything for children to listen to?

Additional

Information: I guess I was thinking of children's stories.

Reason: I just wanted to know.

Answer: records and tapes of many children's stories

Source: Holdings

MAP DIVISION

1. Question: Is there a map that tells me what language is spoken in Greece besides Greek?

Additional

Information: None

Reason: I know that some maps show languages.

Answer: several linguistic maps

Source: Holdings

APPENDIX

Part B: Instruction sheet.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Fill out one record sheet for each call.

State the question exactly as it is worded.

Give no additional information except what is listed for the question you are asking. If questions are asked of you, answer using the information you have been given for the question.

If a reason for the question is required, give the reason written on your question sheet.

Wait for the answer if at all possible. If the responder asks to call you back always tell them that you will call them later and ask when you should make that call back. If this should be objectionable to the responder, remain firm that you must call them back. Give the reason that you will not be at the phone constantly and cannot predict the exact time you will be there.

You will be asked to make calls. Please make in the morning, in the afternoon, and after 4:00 p.m. but before 8:00 p.m. Insofar as possible, distribute the calls for each division throughout the day.

Make only one call to a library during each of the periods.

Do not try to disguise your voice, but talk in a normal tone.

DO NOT indicate that this is anything other than a legitimate request for information.

Interviewing in the context of this study means: did the person answering the phone try to find out exactly what you wanted by asking questions of you or did they take your question as you first stated it.

If they ask questions and/or rephrase your question to make sure they understand exactly what you want, answer yes to the interviewing question.

If they make no attempt to do anything but answer your question as you first stated it, answer no to the interviewing question.

If they say anything at all to help clarify your question, answer somewhat to the interviewing question.

It might be worthwhile if you used the additional comment section of the record sheet to explain an interview experience you had if it was not a definite yes or no.

Please return the question sheets along with the record sheets.

Try and make all your calls within a week after you receive your questions.